

**GINO J. MERLI VETERANS' CENTER
ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
August 17, 2023**

CALL TO ORDER

Travis Davis, Executive Director, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Secretary Bernie McDonald recorded roll call and attendance was as follows:

MEMBERS

Lisa Solarczyk, President - Marine Corps League (Excused)
William Smith, Vice President - The American Legion
Bernard "Bernie" McDonald, Secretary - AMVETS
Robert Cudworth - Military Officers Association of America (Excused)
Robert Smith - Military Order of the Purple Heart (Excused)
Russell Canevari - Veterans of Foreign Wars
Joe Sylvester - Disabled American Veterans
Abbey Russell for Rosemary Brown - PA State Senate
Kyle Donahue – PA State Representative
Tim Cleveland – PSACDVA
Lisa Kaye – PSACDVA
Roger Risner - GJMVC Resident Representative

DMVA

Major General Mark J. Schindler - Adjutant General, Pennsylvania (Excused)
Maureen Weigl, BG - Deputy Adjutant General, VA
Travis Davis – Executive Director, Long-Term Care
Barbara Raymond – Director, Bureau of Veterans' Homes (Excused)
Vito P. Ruggiero – GJMVC Commandant
Kathleen Ambrose - GJMVC Deputy Commandant

OTHERS PRESENT / INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Lynn O'Day, Recorder
Sarah Butler, Admissions Coordinator
Janice Mcallister, Volunteer Coordinator
Maria Coles, ADON
Erica Comine, Infection Preventionist
Beth Warner, Regional Compliance Officer
Dr. Kazmierski, Medical Director
Janice Gavern, The American Legion

MOMENT OF SILENCE

- A moment of silence was led by Travis Davis, Executive Director. Mr. Richard Green, Blinded Veterans, recently passed away.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

- Previous minutes accepted as written.

REVIEW OF MEMBER STATUS

<i>Jewish War Veterans</i>	<i>(Vacant)</i>
<i>Catholic War Veteran</i>	<i>(Vacant)</i>
<i>Military Order of the Purple Heart</i>	<i>(Vacant)</i>
<i>Blinded Veterans Association</i>	<i>(Vacant)</i>

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY ADJUTANT GENERAL

- General Weigl reported that 5 of our 6 homes are 5 stars and 1 is 4 stars.
- She stated that she attended the NASVH conference and gathered a great deal of information that she will be sharing.
- Next week is the National AM Vets convention in Pittsburgh.
- The motorcycle ride for Gino Merli will be this weekend.
- The Hollidaysburg project is going well.
- We will be starting to use ID badges to get on and off base.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF LONG-TERM CARE

- Travis Davis reported that we will begin posting the meeting minutes from all homes on the website. They will be in draft form until signed off at the next meeting.
- Long-term care budget will receive an increase from DOH next year.
- Our homes have had over 2 dozen inspections and surveys over the past year as well as internal surveys by our compliance team.
- 5 of our facilities have acquired 5-star ratings. There are over 700 facilities in the state, and we rank in the top 10%. Star ratings can change month to month, and we are hoping and striving to maintain that status.
- We have had 1,060 admissions which is the highest in 3 years. There is an overall waitlist of 239 and 180 of them are veterans.
- We remain above the minimum for staffing. We have been focusing on recruitment and retention. We have a lot of overtime and agency staff being utilized.
- The project in Hollidaysburg is moving forward. We did have a few setbacks. We hit a powerline and had to transport some residents to the local VA. The team responded very well.
- We have a new commandant at Hollidaysburg, Christina Dambeck and we also have an open director of nursing position at Delaware Valley.

REPORT OF THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR

- Dr. Kazmierski reported that the new strain of COVID is currently in house. We have 10 residents, 1 in the hospital and 12 staff positive. Initial indications are mild. They should be releasing a booster late this September or early October. It will be available for compromised individuals and those with respiratory issues.
- We are ready to administer immunizations against FLU. We had a strong FLU season last year.
- All usual vaccines are or will be available to staff and residents.
- We continue to reduce the use of antibiotics and catheters.
- We are continuing to reduce the use of antipsychotic medications.

REPORT OF THE ADMISSIONS DIRECTOR

- Sarah Butler reported that our census is at 162. We had 31 admissions, 2 discharges and 20 expired. That is a 5% increase.
- We received 20 applications in July.
- Our waitlist is now at 3 to 4 weeks for veterans and 1 to 3 months for non-veterans.
- We ask that you continue to help with the application process within the community. Take application packets with you and give them when needed. The packets answer questions and have all the contact information in them.

REPORT OF THE COMMANDANT

- Vito Ruggiero reported that we are within the top 10% of the facilities in the state. He expressed his thanks for the leadership in the facility and asked that the council promote this status within the community.
- We have some construction and projects going on around the facility and grounds.
 - The trees are gone to make way for a new fence.
 - Utility lines are being laid for the corner LED message board.
 - We are repaving the parking lot.
 - We will be giving a facelift to the internal areas.
 - The canteen will be getting a facelift, it will be moved to a new are. It will have new items as well as indoor and outdoor seating.
- Our facility assessment went well. We need to put a plan in place by September 1.
- We are currently dealing with COVID and masking.
- Our annual motorcycle ride is this weekend. It will be at Harley Davidson in Dickson City. We encourage everyone to come out and enjoy the day.
- The golf tournament hasn't been finalized yet but we should have the numbers for you by the next meeting in November.

THE GOOD OF THE COUNCIL

- Janice Gavern presented the facility with photos and portraits to be displayed throughout the women's wing and the facility.

ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting was announced: November 16, 2023, at 10:00 a.m.